

Short Grass So Unstable Even Stray Dogs Can Upset Them

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MERTZON — As I have indicated previously in these communiques, the people surrounding my boss' outfit come close to being the all around world champions at bickering and stirring up trouble.

Besides being as bellicose as a first-chick game hen, they must be the worst hombres on earth at turning inconsequential matters into gigantic crises. Almost anything will upset them. And I found out the other morning when I ran across a neighbor on the north side that they will fly into the middle of a person for the slightest remarks.

In this case, all that happened was that a trio of stray dogs had been making a few passes through the neighbor's early-lambing ewes.

From the way he was carrying on, you might have thought the whole future of the sheep industry was being threatened; and furthermore, that until these playful dogs were captured, there wasn't going to be an ounce of wool or a pound of lamb raised from the Pecos River eastward.

And the dog population wasn't the only object of his wrath. He was deprecating owners of all pets as if keepers of tabbies and pooches were organized into a conspiracy directed toward abolishing sheepmen. Indeed, it's a blessing that one of those ladies who is constantly steamed up over humans being humane to everything except other humans didn't hear his threats; she might have mustered a special division just to keep an eye on the short grass country.

Finally, when he was out of breath, I tried to soothe him by assuring him that I knew the pattern of conduct of all three of the suspects. I told him if he would only be patient for another five or six weeks, the leader of the pack would lose interest in running sheep in order to honor the opening of the spring rabbit trailing season which is so popular with that particular breed of potlickers.

This encouragement fell on deaf ears. He began an even more incensed tirade. It is doubtful if the loosest-tongued mule skinner who ever buckled a hame strap on a half-broke jack could have matched the smoking blue adjectives he directed toward all pad-footed animals. After some time of his ranting, raving, and wild arm swinging, I again intervened telling him the pet owners were having their share of trouble, too.

I advised him that it was my understanding that dog food had risen in price to the point where quite a number of dogs were having to eat the same fare as humans. I added that inflation had hit the cat accessory business very hard, and that cats were suffering so much from lack of perfumed catbox filler that many once happy felines were neurotically chewing up their sweaters and rubber balls.

Well, before I could continue, he rudely threw his pickup in gear and roared away.

As you can see, this neighbor was taking to heart an incident that, at the outside, couldn't amount to more than, say, a \$1000 loss. He was so shaken by this pre-spring dog trouble that no amount of Christian solicitude would calm him.

Even after all these years, I can't understand why my fellow short grassers are so unstable and unpredictable. Someone has suggested it's the strain of living in this nuclear age. But when you consider what these hombres have withstood during the depression, subsequent drouths, and more depression, it's hard to believe that even an atomic holocaust would perturb them, much less some loose dogs.

Maybe it's just a temporary failing that will pass in a century or so and be completely forgotten by the year 2100. At any rate I dearly hope it will. Life on these short grass ranges can be difficult enough without a bunch of warlike people to make it more complex.